

GOV. QUINN CONVENES FIRST “COLLEGE, CAREER READINESS BEGINS AT BIRTH” SYMPOSIUM

State Stakeholders Meet; Align Strategies to Support Birth to Third Grade Learners in School, Life Success

CHICAGO – April 10, 2014 -- The Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) is convening the state’s first-ever symposium on “college and career readiness begins at birth” with national and state experts and stakeholders representing organizations, school districts and advocacy organizations throughout Illinois involved in the birth through third grade educational continuum. Funded by a generous grant from the National Governors Association and the Midwest Comprehensive Center, the symposium will be held on Thursday, April 10 at the Northern Illinois University Conference Center in Naperville.

“The future of our state depends on the quality of education,” Governor Quinn said. “A quality early learning experience gives Illinois children the foundation and basic skills they need for success in school. Bringing together expert educators will emphasize the important role each plays in building a student’s capacity for learning.”

The symposium, “College and Career Readiness Begins at Birth: Connecting the Dots for Student Success,” builds on Governor Quinn’s “Birth to Five Initiative,” which he first outlined during his State of the State speech. Research shows that children with a solid educational foundation in their first eight years are significantly more likely to be successful in school, college, career and life.

“Achieving Governor Quinn’s goal of ensuring 60% of Illinoisans have a high-quality, industry-recognized degree or credential by 2025 must start with quality early learning aligned with elementary school instruction,” said Theresa Hawley, Ph.D., executive director, OECD. “For the first time, we are gathering stakeholders from the early learning community through high school to discuss better aligning efforts to support our young learners from birth to third grade, helping them succeed in school and in life,” she said.

The Governor’s FY15 budget calls for investing \$100 million in Birth to Five in FY15, with a total five-year investment of \$1.5 billion, a game-changing investment to [improve](#) access to prenatal care; early care and learning opportunities for every child; and strong parent support.

Research shows that quality, early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy to promote growth. Every dollar invested in early education saves \$7 in special education, public assistance, corrections and lost taxes.

Since taking office, Governor Quinn has fought to preserve education from radical budget cuts, and built and repaired 978 schools. In his Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Address, Governor Quinn laid out an honest and responsible budget for the next fiscal year along with a five-year blueprint that will secure the state’s finances for the long-term, provide significant tax relief to homeowners and working families and invest like never before in education and early childhood.

National Expertise

A national expert on early learning, Kristie Kauerz, research assistant professor of P-3 policy and leadership at the University of Washington, will give the keynote presentation on “Setting the Stage for a Birth to Third Grade Education Continuum.”

The one-day symposium will include presentations and workshops, allowing participants to discuss policies, practices and implementation and learn about the importance of systems alignment in the early learning through high school continuum. More than 150 educators and advocates will participate in the symposium.

About the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD)

Created in 2009, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development leads the state's initiatives to create an integrated system of quality early learning and development programs to help give all Illinois children a strong educational foundation before they begin kindergarten. OECD focuses the state's efforts to maximize its investment in early learning programs and create an integrated learning continuum. Among its initiatives, the office manages the Early Learning Council, a public private partnership that helps improve the lives of Illinois children and families; oversees ExceleRate Illinois, the new Quality Rating and Improvement System for early learning and development programs; and works to strengthen training and supports for the early learning workforce.

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